



*INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE*

# TESTIMONY

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**Statement of**

**Ronald C. Ruecker**

**President**

**International Association of Chiefs of Police**

**before the**

**Committee on the Judiciary  
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and  
Homeland Security**

**United States House of Representatives**

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Good morning Mr. Chairman:

My name is Ron Ruecker and I am the Director of the Division of Public Safety in Sherwood, Oregon. I also serve as the President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss this critical issue facing state, tribal, and local law enforcement agencies.

In the United States, there are more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies and well over 700,000 officers who patrol our state highways and the streets of our communities each and every day.

During the past 15 years, these officers and the law enforcement agencies they serve have made tremendous strides in reducing the level of crime and violence in our communities. This has been accomplished in part because these officers have an intimate knowledge of their communities and because they have developed close relationships with the citizens they serve.

Yet, despite the best efforts of our nation's law enforcement officers, the disturbing truth is that each year in the United States, well over a million of our fellow citizens are victims of violent crime. Unfortunately, in the last two years we have seen a steady

increase in the rate of violent crime in the United States in some communities.

While there are many different theories as to why violent crime is increasing in these communities after years of often double-digit declines, there is one fact that all can agree upon: no place is immune. What were once considered problems of only major metropolitan areas—drug addiction and distribution, violent crime, gangs, and poverty—have migrated to suburban and even rural locations.

Cities with populations 25,000 to 50,000 are seeing the fastest growing incidents. From 2004 through 2006, the violent crime rate in these communities rose by more than seven percent. In towns with populations from 10,000 to 25,000 the homicide rate went up by 9.4 percent over the same two-year period.

It is telling that this increase in crime in America, violent and otherwise, corresponds to the substantial decline in funding for local and state law enforcement from federal government assistance programs.

In the years since 2001, the very programs that allowed state, tribal, and local law enforcement to combat crime in our communities, such as the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program, have suffered significant budget reductions. This is both unfortunate and shortsighted because this program has consistently demonstrated its value by providing critical resources to the state, tribal, and local law enforcement community. By reducing funding for Byrne-JAG, Congress and the Administration have significantly reduced the ability of law enforcement agencies to combat both crime and terrorism. The simple truth is that today, police departments throughout the nation have significantly fewer resources to combat crime than they did in 1990s.

**Unfortunately, in the FY 2008 Omnibus, Byrne-JAG funding was funded at just \$170 million, a decrease of 68 percent.** Additionally, the Administration's FY 2009 budget proposal calls for the complete elimination of Byrne grant funding.

Regrettably, these cuts only continue a trend that began in FY 2003 of significant funding reductions for law enforcement assistance funding at the Department of Justice. In fact, when compared to the FY 2002 funding level of \$3.8 billion, the Administration's FY

2009 proposal represents a reduction of more than \$3.4 billion or 90 percent.

I won't go into a complete analysis of the proposed budget, but instead I would like to submit a copy of the IACP's Budget Analysis for the record. I would, however, like to express the IACP's profound concern over the impact these cuts have had on the Byrne-JAG program.

It is the IACP's belief that the Byrne-JAG Program played an integral role in our ability to reduce crime rates in the past. By providing law enforcement agencies with the necessary resources, training, and assistance, the Byrne-JAG Program has become an invaluable ally to state, tribal, and local law enforcement agencies. It is this fact that makes the current situation completely unacceptable not only to the nation's entire law enforcement community, but also to the citizens we are sworn to protect.

For example, in my home state of Oregon, if Byrne-JAG funds continue to decline as in years past, these programs will be severely reduced or eliminated:

- All six of our multi-jurisdictional drug task forces that cover all of Oregon's 36 counties;

- Four of our most successful domestic and family violence prevention programs;
- Two alcohol and drug treatment programs;
- 11 drug court programs; and
- Four juvenile violence prevention programs.

In addition, some agencies will no longer be able to afford sobriety check point equipment, portable radios, less-than-lethal technologies, and training materials and equipment.

To give you a national perspective of the impact of Byrne-JAG funding, on March 7 of this year, 41 state drug enforcement agencies participated in a one day effort called “Operation Byrne Blitz” that resulted in the arrests of 4,220 individuals.

The operation also yielded the seizure of

- 20,851 pounds of marijuana;
- 1,749 pounds of cocaine;
- 120 pounds of methamphetamine;
- 6,973 pharmaceutical pills; and
- 13,244 ecstasy pills.

“Operation Byrne Blitz” also seized

- 105 methamphetamine labs;

- 666 firearms; and \$13,463,832.00 in U.S. currency.

Finally, 228 children were determined to be endangered and those cases were referred to the appropriate child protection agency.

All of this was made possible by the funds provided by the Byrne-JAG program.

For six and half years, law enforcement agencies and officers have willingly made the sacrifices necessary to meet the challenges of fighting both crime and terrorism. They have done so because they understand the critical importance of what they are sworn to do, and they remain faithful to fulfilling their mission of protecting and serving the public. However, the expenditure of resources necessary to maintain these efforts has left many police departments in a financial situation so disastrous that their ability to provide the services their citizens expect and deserve has been threatened.

This must not continue. If our efforts to reduce crime and promote homeland security are to have any chance of succeeding, it is absolutely vital for Congress and the Administration to make the necessary resources available that will allow America's first line of

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defense—law enforcement—to mount effective anticrime programs to protect our communities.

Unfortunately, reductions to the Byrne-JAG Program have the potential to weaken severely the capabilities of law enforcement agencies nationwide, reducing their ability to mount aggressive and effective crime prevention and crime reduction programs. Sadly, this will undoubtedly lead to more crime and violence in our hometowns.

Thank you for your time. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.